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HOOSIERS ON THE MOVE



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The Indiana State Trails, Greenways and Bikeways Plan

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Rough Draft
May, 2006

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Hoosiers on the Move

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Prepared by

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INTRODUCTION

Indiana's Trail, Greenways and Bikeways Plan

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources in cooperation with the Indiana Department of Transportation is producing this trails plan to guide the development and expansion of a statewide system of trails to be used for recreation and transportation throughout Indiana. This plan takes into consideration that all types of trail-related activities are gaining popularity for their mental, physical and spiritual health benefits. It also takes into consideration that people value trails for a variety of reasons. To accommodate this diverse and increasing demand, Indiana's plan sets forth a goal of providing an easily accessible trail opportunity within 15 minutes or 7.5 miles of all Indiana residents.

The plan's coordinated and strategic approach for creating a system of trails in Indiana is intended to motivate all levels of government, private trail groups and organizations into action. The plan envisions linking public lands, natural and scenic areas, tourist destinations and communities with a multi-modal trail system. The plan emphasizes major statewide and regional trails and works to incorporate local linkages into the statewide network.

All trails that are planned and developed in Indiana are considered to be part of the statewide trail vision. These include projects that local governments and private trails groups and organizations are undertaking to develop local trail systems to provide "close to home" recreation and alternative transportation opportunities. To that end, this plan will serve as a guide for allocating resources from such programs as the Federal Recreation Trails Program (RTP) and other financial assistance programs that can be used for trail acquisition and development.

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Purpose

Indiana's trails and greenways plan has been created to function as a tool for improving existing trails and developing future trails through sound planning and design. This plan identifies issues impacting trails on a statewide scale and recommends strategies for addressing these issues. The plan also serves as a comprehensive source of information on recreational trail participation in Indiana. An evolving inventory of major statewide, regional and community trail system resources is included to form the basis for an interconnected statewide network of trails. This plan is intent on stimulating and supporting coordinated approaches to creating and enhancing this network. It will serve as a resource for trail planners, builders, managers and advocates.

Public participation was critical in developing the Indiana Trails Plan. Public comment was solicited through surveys, meetings with the general public and trails interest groups. Development of the document was guided by a steering committee made up of federal, state and local officials, members of trails groups and the general public. It is intended to be a dynamic document, changing over time as new trails are developed and additional opportunities become available.

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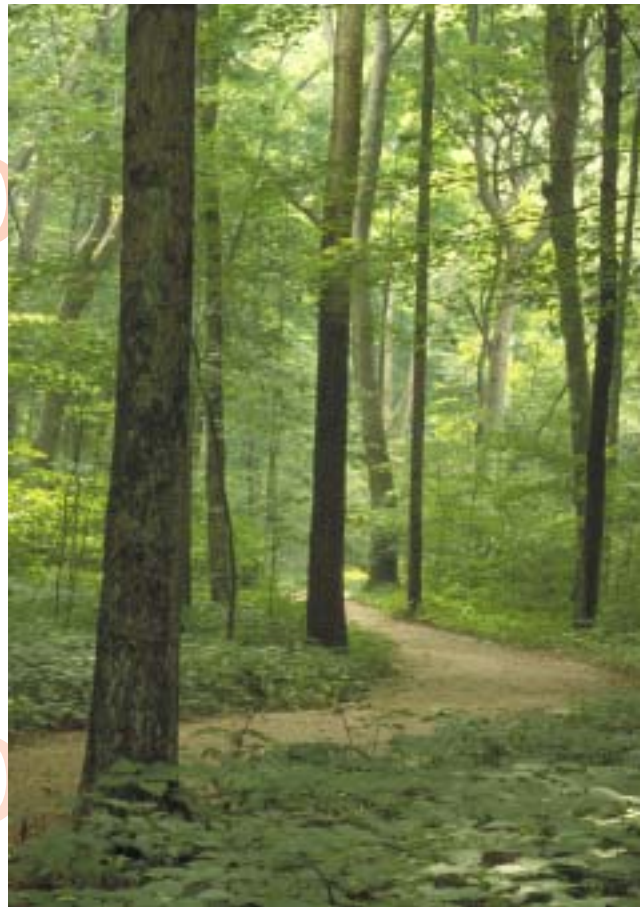
Trails in Hoosier Society

What is a trail? The American Heritage Dictionary broadly defines it as anything from an ancient foot path to a shipping route. This definition includes, but is not limited to, bikeways, rail routes and motor roads. Consequently, the meaning of the word “trail” is, and always has been, passionately debated. Every group of users has its own vision of what a trail should be as well as who it should cater to and provide for. A final definition of “trail” may never be agreed upon, but two things are certain: Trails have a storied history and are inherently dependent on those who use them. For this purpose, a trail shall be a corridor on land or through water that provides recreational, aesthetic, alternate transportation or educational opportunities to both motorized and non-motorized users of all ages and abilities.

In a subsistence economy, trails were primarily used for hunting or gathering food. As technology changed lifestyles, people began using and creating trails for a variety of other uses. Many trails evolved from utilitarian to leisure. Today, trails provide recreation, education, interaction with the environment, community improvement, social networking opportunities, economic development, physical and mental health benefits and much more. All of these uses bring value and benefits to individuals and society as a whole.

Hoosier history is replete with trails from our earliest natives to current users. For example, the native Sauk trail, which connected the area south of Chicago to the Detroit area by passing around the Kankakee swamp and across Northern Indiana, was for economic exchange. Trails linking one mounds village to another, Evansville to Anderson for example, were for commerce. Long-distance water routes such as the Oubache (Wabash) River and Ohio River were used for both economic and cultural exchange. Recreational trail use was restricted to village areas.

Whether by the French, English or others, trails were also used for exploration, economics, military control and conquest. They frequently played a major role in colonization and politics. Valuable cultural trails, such as the route of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the trails of the Underground



Railroad and the Trail of Tears still exist today as historical reminders and cultural resources. Long distance water routes such as the Oubache (Wabash) and Ohio rivers were used for commerce and conquest.

Indiana has other trails that were for moving people, creating communities and sending out food. One valuable federal route, still in use, is called the National Road, another is the Michigan Road. There were numerous connections, like the route from Evansville to Vincennes, from the Ohio River northward to small towns using stage coaches and other secondary routes.

Later came packet boats on canals throughout much of Indiana. The creation and collapse of canals as a money-making venture had a profound effect on Indiana state government. Even today,

Adapted from an essay by Richard Vonnegut
Vice Chair, Hoosier Rails to Trails Council



hints of public skepticism about state spending and government debt can be traced to the failure of the canal system.

Many of these land and water routes were the foundation for steam railroads, electric railroads and macadam roadways during the mid 1800's through the mid 1900's. The corridors of electric inter-urban railroads and paved roads enabled families and individuals to commute or send farm products longer distances in a shorter time. This allowed for a regional trade network to develop. In addition to products, people could now travel to big cities to sightsee, shop and relax on the weekends. Indeed, trails technology allowed people to experience life beyond subsistence, hence the beginnings of recreation. An example of early recreation, around the year 1900, is adults and families bicycling the Central Canal towpath from downtown Indianapolis to Riverside to rent rowboats.

One marketing value derived from the number of rail lines passing through Indianapolis, and thus Indiana, is the moniker "Crossroads of America,"

although now that image is perceived only with respect to highways.

Slowly, roads and the automobile replaced the railroads. The new sensibility was "What's good for the car is good for the country." Unused rail lines were removed and eventually converted, in many cases, to greenways and trails for walking and biking. An increase in walking and bicycling spurred the development of bikeways. This included bikeways on streets designated by signs as well as continuous lanes marked by block-long stripes. Bike lanes located away from the immediate motor surface also increased in number.

Vacant corridors have latent value for communities as utility right-of-ways and as potential bike trails. Indeed, where pipes and cables are buried or wires are strung overhead, the service road serves two purposes. In Indianapolis, for example, before the Monon Trail was paved from Broad Ripple to Fall Creek, a forced-main sewer was laid that saved the city tens of thousands of dollars of the usual street repaving costs. The Calumet Greenway, a

major link of trails around Lake Michigan, is another example of a dual use corridor. It also serves as the service road for overhead power lines.

Trails, particularly when planned with community development in mind, bring economic value to an area. Generally, economic improvement is a result of a combination of four factors: 1) Trails create a new clientele for area businesses. Upon the opening of the Monon Trail in Broad Ripple, an adjacent restaurant, Plump's Last Shot, saw a very large, and unexpected, increase in day and summer evening dining business. 2) Business relocation: The new owners of Valley Bikes moved the store from Crawfordsville to Carmel to be on the Monon Trail. This business has shown strong success since. 3) New employment opportunities: Whether it is short weekend work for youth or full-time jobs for adults, more retail stores mean more opportunities for employment. 4) Trail investment in real estate: This might involve a trail reclaiming and repairing an unused structure (e.g. the rehab of the Wysor Depot in Muncie as the headquarters of the Cardinal Greenway) or reopening a long-vacant building for a retail shop. An example being the Revard Brothers opening a third Bike Line store

in a vacant building at the south end of the Monon Trail in downtown Indianapolis.

On a large scale, real estate development might be the building of condos, houses and/or strip malls adjoining a trail. Better yet, create a whole new town with multiple housing units, shops and community areas built around sidewalks, and trails and trail amenities with consideration given to the culture of non-motor transport and recreation. Any of these economic scenarios may occur in any proportion at any time. The more scenarios, however, the more economic value to a community.

Trails also add historical value to a community. Participation and learning can come through reading tableaux of local history. One of the best national examples of incorporating history into a trail is the Oil Creek Trail in Pennsylvania. It boasts 10 miles of interpretive drawings and text tableaux of the history of oil development from the waning days of whale oil to the recent decades of petroleum as fuel.

The Prairie Duneland Trail at Portage has several interpretive tableaux about various topics (history,



plants, animals, etc.) related to that trail. The Whitewater Trail offers hand maps and a large display board with descriptions of points of history along that trail. The People's Pathway in Greencastle offers a gazebo with a map of the proposed trails system. The historic Delphi canal and trails system offers a community trail and map system complete with an interpretive center and a watered canal section that will soon have a packet boat.

In addition to education, trails also have the potential for positive social impact. Trails improve communities by encouraging informal social walks and gatherings among friends. Notably, these social walkers and other users often create neighborhood "crime watch" security, as has occurred on the Monon Trail south of the fairgrounds. Trails also help create a comprehensive sense of community as shown by Memorial Hospital in Logansport where local health businesses can pay to build a trail, thus channeling costs away from park budgets. Greenways also improve the community's natural environment by encouraging the growth of trees, nature's best air cleaners, which still beat mechanical means.



Trails may originate from many former uses, be they rail trails, river levy systems (Evansville, Indianapolis, Ft. Wayne), canal towpaths (Delphi), old roads, treaty lines, scenic highways, farm perimeters/field edges (National Road Trail in Vigo County) or cross country routes. Trails may be finished with concrete (the 1902 Northern Indianapolis Electric Railroad), asphalt (the Erie Lackawanna in Lake County), a boardwalk (Anderson's Indian Rail Trail Riverwalk), a new, hard (epoxy type) surface or a softer crushed limestone. Trails may also offer a rustic surface of dirt, grass (part of Bloomington's Clear Creek Trail), railroad ballast (the NKP), wood mulch (Marmont Vandalia Trail at Culver) or other material. And though their surfaces may differ, they have one important thing in common. Trails are good for their users, their communities and the vast array of environments they pass through.

As you read the Indiana State Trails Plan, be mindful of the history, the importance to Indiana, the value, and the meaning of trails to countless Hoosiers. Welcome and enjoy.